# The Year 1948

Young soldiers during morning prayers, 1948

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly resolved to divide British Mandatory Palestine into two states: one Jewish and one Arab. Directly after the UN vote on the partition plan, violence broke out between armed Arab units and the Jewish *Haganah* (the underground military Zionist organization) with its élite commando unit, *Palmach*. Boris Vinograd (later Boris Carmi) had been a member of the *Haganah* since 1946 and later, during the War of Independence of 1948/49, served as a sentry and as a photographer. The British Mandatory power left Palestine and Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister, proclaimed the State of Israel on May 14, 1948. The Israeli Defence Force, *Zahal*, was established and, from this point on, all armed groups in Israel were placed under one supreme command. On May 15, the newly founded State of Israel was attacked by the armed forces of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, it found itself engaged in the first Arab-Israeli War; and Boris Carmi, as a staff photographer for the Israeli army magazine *BeMahaneh*, observed and recorded this conflict at first hand. In spite of the military superiority of the invading forces, Israel prevailed and blocked the advance of the Arab armies. In the course of the fighting hundreds of thousands of Palestinians abandoned their villages and became refugees—partly under severe pressure from Israel, partly in response to Arab appeals. This War of Independence ended in 1949 with the military victory of Israel. Through UN mediation, an armistice was negotiated and agreed with the Arab parties to the conflict.
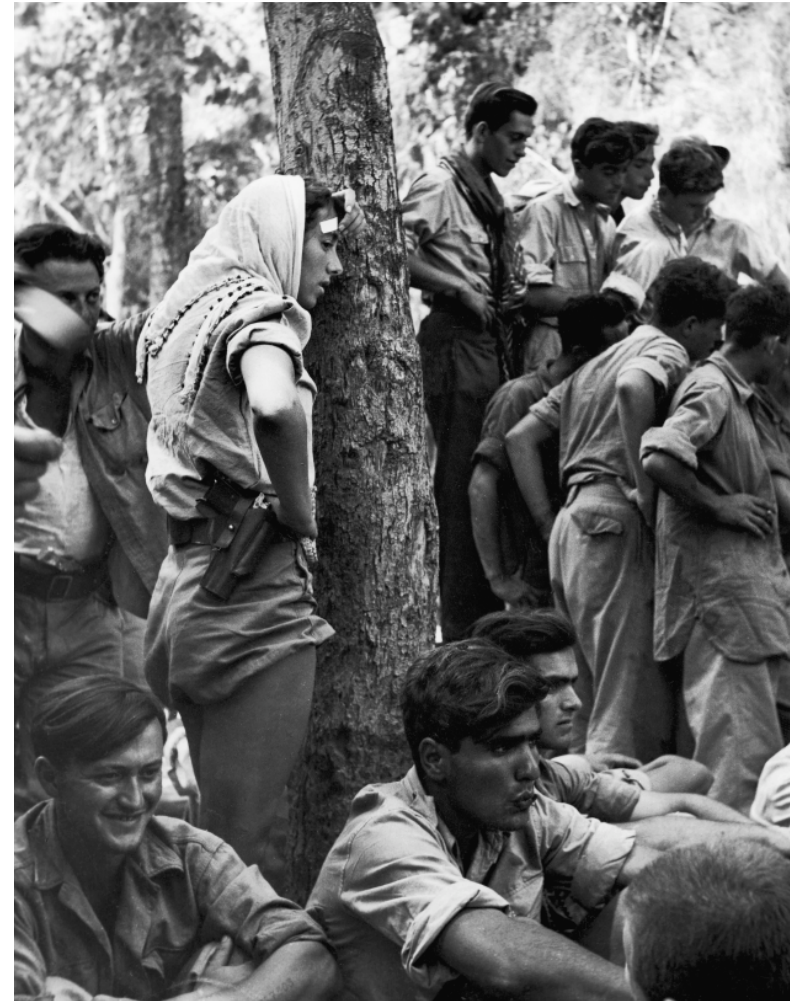
Palmach briefing in the Ben-Shemen forest, 1948

Egyptian prisoners after the capture of the former
British police station "Iraq-Suedan" in the Negev
Desert by the Israeli Givati brigade, 1948

Givati Cavalry Division during the War of Independence, near Gadera, 1948

British camp for Jewish refugees, Cyprus, after the
retreat of the British forces, summer 1948

Command position and field hospital, 1948

Recruitment camp in Kiria Meir, Tel Aviv, 1948

"Ha-Chisbatron," the Palmach's troop-entertainment ensemble, who performed satirical sketches and songs, 1949

"Eyes right" command during a parade in a women's unit, 1951

A monk and a Mukhtar (head of an Arab village) surrender to the Israeli forces, border to Lebanon, 1948

In Transit

Food distribution, transit camp, 1950s

Alyia (Hebrew for ascent), the term used for Jewish migration to Israel, reflects the fundamental principle of Zionist ideology: the immigration to *Eretz Israel* as the fulfilment of an ideal. Under the British Mandate, a strict quota system had been imposed on immigration into Palestine. In the years before 1948 Jewish underground organizations had — together with the illegal Alyia Beth — nonetheless succeeded in smuggling about 100,000 immigrants, into Palestine on dilapidated ships. After the Second World War the British had set up detention camps on the island of Cyprus for Jews illegally entering Palestine. With the founding of the State of Israel all restrictions were immediately removed, and the first mass *alyia* of Jews from all over the world doubled the Jewish population of Israel within three years. This wave of immigrants included Holocaust survivors from Europe alongside entire Jewish communities from Libya, the Yemen and Iraq. To begin with, this new existence in Israel was a culture shock, especially for those Jews coming from oriental countries. They found themselves in a secular, European-influenced society, where they were familiar with neither the spoken language nor the way of life. The Jews from Europe administrated the new wave of immigrants and, for the most part, continued to see in Western values and in European culture a model for the new state in the Middle East. A lack of sensitivity in the integration of Jews from Arab states in the Middle East and North Africa into this new society remains the cause of ethnic tension in Israel to this very day.

The new immigrants, who came to Israel by ship, were accommodated, for their first few days, in an absorption camp. From there they were moved on into hastily improvised transit camps, the *Ma'aberot*, which consisted of tents or tin huts, also initially intended as merely provisional dwellings. Carmi recorded the various waves of immigrants with his camera, fascinated by the diversity of lifestyles and life stories that collided in the *Ma'aberot*. Almost all of the new immigrants were destitute, and their integration into society and the search for accommodation and employment confronted the new State of Israel with grave economic and social challenges. It was only with the arrival of German "restitution payments" that the Israeli economy improved.

Absorption camp "Sha'ar Alyia," Haifa, 1951

Absorption camp "Sha'ar Alyia," Haifa,
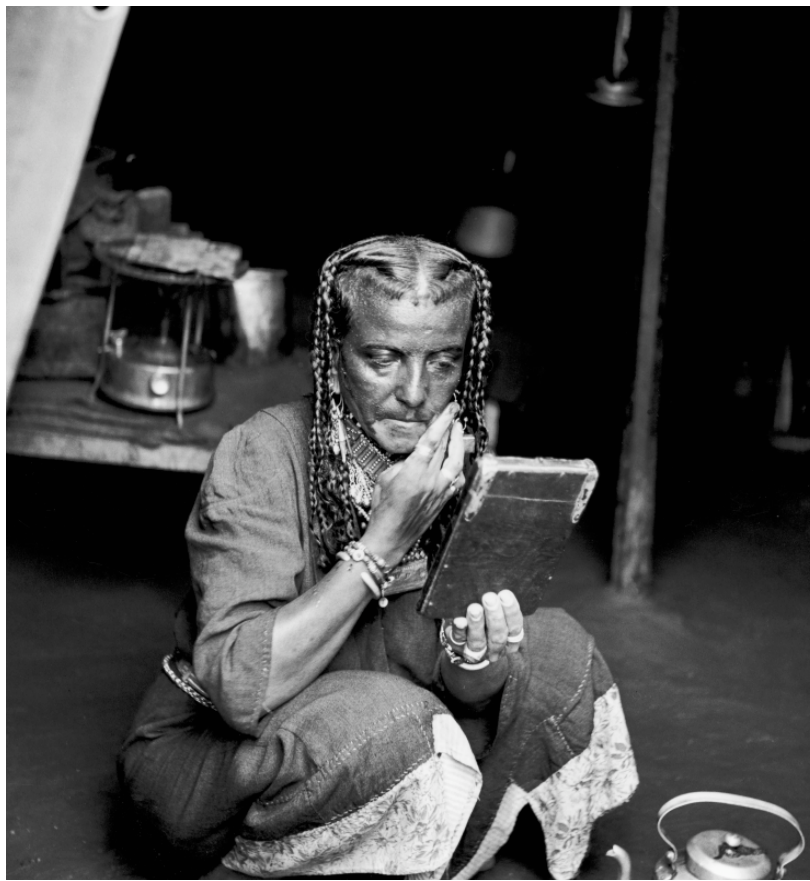1951

Ma'abera—tents in a transit camp, 1950s

New immigrants from North Africa, 1950s

Girl from the Atlas Mountains,
Lachish district, 1959

Yemenite woman applying her traditional make-up, transit camp, 1950s

Yemenites cooking, transit camp Rosh Ha'ayin, early 1950s

Moroccan woman in traditional gown,
Lachish district, 1959

Scene in a transit camp, 1950s

Quick course in modern cookery: a Primus stove replaces an open fire, early 1950s

Immigrant in his new home, absorption camp, 1950s

New immigrant from North Africa in a transit camp, 1950s